UNITED
NATIONS

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Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/25755
11 May 1993

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 11 MAY 1993 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to present to you the attached statement from my Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Haris Silajdzic, on the issue of United Nations relief personnel in the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

May I ask for kind assistance in circulating this letter as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Muhamed SACIRBEY
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex

Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Office of the Foreign Minister

To remove final obstacle to lifting of arms embargo
Bosnian Government officially requests withdrawal of
United Nations relief personnel

Washington, D.C., May 9 - The Foreign Minister of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Dr. Haris Silajdzic, today announced the formal request of his Government that United Nations relief personnel either depart his country or be reconfigured to ensure their military defensibility. On behalf of his government, Silajdzic released the following statement:

"The presidency and government of Bosnia-Herzegovina hereby officially requests that the United Nations withdraw, as expeditiously as possible, all U.N. personnel deployed on our territory for purposes of delivering humanitarian relief. We do so because concern over the safety of those personnel now constitutes a significant obstacle to the defense of this sovereign nation.

"While deeply grateful for the valour of the many individuals who have served under the auspices of the United Nations on our territory, we find that the U.N. presence on the ground has become an impediment to critical decisions by the international community now urgently needed if our democratic, multi-ethnic republic is to be permitted the means to defend itself.

"It is our intention today, in requesting the withdrawal of relief personnel, to remove that final obstacle to the lifting of the arms embargo.

"Despite our best efforts, it remains insufficiently understood by international public opinion that the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina is not a civil war, but a war of fascist aggression against a multi-ethnic democratic republic. Our government and our army remain multi-ethnic, and we remain committed to the goal of preserving the Bosnian republic as a multi-ethnic democracy with full guarantees of all human rights for all citizens.

"President Clinton understands our commitment and our desperate plight, and we have been encouraged by his efforts to achieve a lifting of the arms embargo so unfairly imposed upon our nation in its hour of need. We believe that the maintenance of the embargo, in the face of a continuing onslaught by fascist Serb forces, is not an act of conscience but of arrogant indifference to the fate of hundreds of thousands of loyal Bosnian citizens, who plead only for the right to defend themselves.

"We regret that world opinion has been beguiled by the image of us as a helpless people. To be sure, we are besieged by a relentless aggressor. But our forces have fought with courage and skill against overwhelming odds created inadvertently by the misguided policies of the United Nations. Our forces and our people remain ready to fight on in defense of their liberty and their principles. Only if they are permitted the means to do so will we attain, within our nation and our region, the balance of power that is the prerequisite to a negotiated settlement that will bring lasting peace and stability.

"Should the United Nations in its wisdom choose to reconfigure U.N. forces on our territory so that they can adequately defend themselves and so that their safety does not dominate international concern, we will welcome that decision. In the meantime, as the fate of our nation hangs in the balance, we beseech the Security Council to cease an arms embargo that has, in practice, constituted an international intervention against our legitimate rights as a Member of the United Nations. It is an intervention that not only undermines our own security but, by its unfairness and perverse result, compromises the principles and future of the United Nations itself."